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ABSTRACT

The adult students who are the subject of this report bring a different orientation with them to the study of language than does the typical adult immigrant or foreign student of English. This former group may be engaged in foreign language study in order to satisfy a college level language requirement or as part of a continuing education or personal improvement program. The paper, divided into three sections, discusses the characteristics and needs of these adults as well as the means available for their education. In discussing the physiological, psychological, and sociological characteristics of older learners, the paper reviews: (1) adult life-cycle tasks; (2) age and learning ability; (3) the role of visual and auditory impairment in learning; (4) information processing, problem solving, and the older learner; and (5) affective variables and the older learner. Discussed programs, methods, and techniques available to the teacher of older language learners include the audiolingual method, the cognitive method, the grammar/translation method, community language learning, suggestology, and the total physical response method. Also discussed are communicative competence, individualization of instruction, intensive instruction, means for maximizing the learning strengths of adult learners, and methods for improving classroom organization and material preparation. (JK)

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LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION: THEORY AND PRACTICE

34

The Older Foreign Language Learner: A Challenge for Colleges and Universities

Elizabeth G. Joiner

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"As recently as 1970, half the American people were under 28 years old. The profile of the population was a triangle whose apex represented those in the late years of life....Now, suddenly we are discovering (in the very way that individuals themselves discover their youth has passed) that we are a nation of aging people" (Weinstock, 83, pp. 18-19). This quotation from The Graying of the Campus implies that we as a nation are becoming aware of a major shift in our population, which has already begun to take place. Looking into the mirror of higher education and finding reflected there not only the shining hair, firm skin, and straight teeth of youth but also the character-lined faces of the middle-aged and elderly is an experience that many foreign language educators have not permitted to penetrate their consciousness. Like those who would deny the passing of their youth, we suppress or refuse to see the increasing number of students beyond the typical 18-24 age group who are enrolled in language classes at the college or university level, and we do not recognize that we will need to change to meet the needs of those nontraditional students, who may become the traditional students of the future.

This is not to say that teachers of foreign and second languages have not been concerned with adult learners. Quite the contrary is true. Adult immigrants have typically had to learn English as a second language in order to put bread on the table. While some of this has been the natural language learning of the streets, other immigrants have taken advantage of opportunities for formal instruction offered by colleges or universities. Foreign students, too, have been taught English so that they could participate more effectively in the intellectual and social life of the host institution. In both cases, the students have had a pressing need to use the language studied in order to function in a society where that language was the primary, if not the only, means of communication.[1]

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[1]The Council of Europe's notional-functional syllabus designed to meet adult learners' communication needs is an outstanding contribution to the field of adult second language learning. It should be pointed out, however, that the syllabus and procedures of the Council of Europe were originally designed for use by native teachers in the instruction of migrant workers who needed to function in specific kinds of employment within their host country. Thus, because both the orientation of the approach and the clientele for whom it was intended differ greatly from those found in typical post-secondary language instruction in this country, it would be erroneous at this point to assume that the Council of Europe approach offers an appropriate model for dealing with the adult foreign language learners whom we are encountering in increasing numbers in our colleges and universities.

The adult students who are the subject of this paper, however, bring to foreign language study a very different orientation from that of the adult immigrants and foreign students with whose needs we are somewhat familiar. Our concern is for those older learners who are generally referred to as nontraditional students, i.e., students who may be taking a foreign language course either to satisfy the language requirement for an undergraduate degree or as part of a continuing education or lifelong learning program. The paper will be divided into several sections. The first two sections will deal with just who these learners are and why foreign language teachers should be aware of them. In this portion, the physiological, psychological, and sociological characteristics of older learners will be reviewed. The third part of the paper will review currently available programs, methods, and techniques in the light of characteristics delineated in sections 1 and 2. The last two sections will describe an optimal learning situation for older learners and will suggest future directions for their education.

The Nontraditional Student: A General View

Most people agree that adulthood begins at age 18 with the right to vote, to drink alcoholic beverages, and to bear arms. As our population has grown older, however, we have begun to be aware that there are various stages of adulthood, each with characteristic experiences and responsibilities. Knox (43) cites a survey by Cameron, which found that a representative sample of U.S. citizens recognized the following stages of adulthood: young adulthood (early, 18-25; late, 26-39), middle age (early, 40-55; late, 56-64), and old age (early, 65-80; late, 80+). This and other studies reveal that young adults are generally seen as active, energetic, and outgoing; middle-aged people as understanding, mature, restrained, and controlled; and the old and aged as energyless, inactive, socially inefficient, and mystical (pp. 49-50).

The early young adults who have for many years been our typical college undergraduate students have begun to see their ranks become less homogeneous as an increasing number of older adults have decided to enter or return to college. This trend, which began around 1955--especially for two-year community colleges (Knox, 43)--became greatly accelerated in the 1970s as the following statistics reveal: the participation of part-time students over age 55 increased by 55.2% between 1969 and 1975 (Elling, 22, p. 107); in 1973-74, the college-going population over the age of 21 increased by 81.1% over the previous year (Hameister and Hickey, 33, p. 6); in 1975, according to the Census Bureau, at least one of every three students pursuing a college degree was over 25--12% more than in 1971 (Emerging Issues, 23); by 1977, 48% of college students were over 21, 10.4% of whom were over 35 years of age (Hameister and Hickey,

p. 6). The coming decade will no doubt see a continuation of the trend toward an older college undergraduate population, as the number of eighteen-year-olds in the U.S. peaked in the fall of 1980 and will bottom out in 1992, when there will be 26% fewer eighteen-year-olds than there were in 1979 (Cross, 16, p. 14). Foresighted educators are beginning to refer to the 1980s as "a decade of continuing and adult education" (Gross and Brightman, 31). The mirror image has become a reality.

As foreign language educators, we must face this new reality, first by learning as much as we can about the nontraditional students who are presently enrolled in significant numbers in our classes, and second by trying to anticipate the effects of an increasing number of older students upon college language programs in the areas of undergraduate instruction, continuing eduction, and special programs.

One characteristic that many adult learners have in common is that they have already had a fairly good education: 46% have previously taken work beyond the high-school level (Rosenthal, 63, p. 12). Aslanian, as cited by Gross (30), found that of nearly 2,000 adults over the age of 25, half had studied some topic in the past year. Of these, 83% named some transition in their lives that caused them to undertake this study. According to Elling (22), nontraditional students gave the following reasons for returning to college: to improve job skills (41.8%), to get a new job (11.5%), to pursue a subject of personal interest (27.7%), to enhance social life and recreation (7.8%). Whites (92.3% in 1975) outnumber blacks, and those making over $10,000 (54.6% in 1975) are more likely to enroll than the poor. The growing number of married and divorced women in higher education is cited by Knox (43). In 1974-75, 36.1% of participants in adult education were between the ages of 25-34, and 19.6% fell into the 35-44 age category. Today's older learner, then, is likely to be a white person in late young adulthood or early middle age. He--or very probably she--will be fairly well off financially and moderately well educated and will have returned to college because of a major life transition related to his or her occupation.

If we abandon the mirror and gaze into the crystal ball, we find once again the image of the older learner, now in late middle age and beyond as well as in late young adulthood or early middle age. In the U.S., the fastest growing sector of the population (Weinstock, 83) comprises people beyond age 65 (22.4 million according to 1976 Census figures). By the year 2000, it is estimated that 45.5% of all Americans will be between 30 and 64 years of age (Long, 53); if the death rate continues to drop, and if American women continue to bear so few children, the median age of the population will be 37.3 by the year 2030 (Weinstock p. 20).

These projections, coupled with the well-established fact that the more education people have, the more likely they are to

participate in adult education, make it extremely likely that colleges and universities will be called upon increasingly to meet the needs of the middle-aged and elderly. By 1990, half the people over 65 are expected to be high school graduates; presently, older persons have completed an average of only nine years of school (Weinstock, 83, p. 29). As the educational level of older people increases, many more of them are likely to participate in the reduced and free tuition programs now available in 43 states and the District of Columbia (Long and Rossing, 54). The raising of the compulsory retirement age notwithstanding, Weinstock predicts that the trend toward early retirement will continue, and that there will be increasing numbers of people between the ages of 55 and 65 who will make up a natural constituency for late-in-life education. The Mondale Bill on Lifelong Learning[1] should give impetus to what is now "an embryonic movement...that would establish education for older adults as a normal function of the postsecondary system" (Weinstock, p. 13).

In the future, it is likely that we will see many of the students now in high school at a number of stages in their adult lives, for it is predicted that they will have three different careers and seven different jobs, that they will be able to schedule their lives flexibly with alternating periods of work and education, and that they will be able to engage in more leisure-time activities--including education--because of a shorter work week, extended vacations, shared work, etc. (Elling, 22, p. 107). Our hypothetical student might appear first, for example, in an undergraduate French class, then return to take a course in commercial Spanish required for a job change, return once again to take a "Japanese for Travelers" course prior to a trip to the Orient, and finally appear in an Elderhostel German class (provided, of course, that these programs are made available). Thus, the foreign language classes of the future are likely to contain a much higher proportion of students from all the stages of adulthood, and we are likely to see the same students, addicted to learning, returning to colleges and universities at various stages of their lives. At this point, the term nontraditional may become relatively meaningless, as what is now a fairly homogeneous college-age population becomes more and more diverse.

To Be Specific: Adult Life-Cycle Tasks

We have just described our nontraditional learner as probably being a fairly well educated white female in late young adulthood or early middle age who has returned to college

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[1] *Editor's note:* The Mondale Bill was never funded, but some of its provisions were incorporated into the Educational Outreach Program established in October 1980.

because of a major life transition. Such generalizations tend to obscure the fact that the students we are dealing with are extremely dissimilar, representing as they do not only a vast age range but also numerous needs, concerns, and purposes.

The idea that adulthood, like childhood, may be divided into developmental stages, each concerned with certain tasks, is a concept that has received considerable attention in recent years both from the academic community and from the general public. McCoy (56) has suggested ten developmental stages that can be used as the basis for planning adult continuing education programs. Although there may not be an obvious direct link between the stages and language programs, being aware of them can help us to be more sensitive and successful teachers of adults.

The 18- to 22-year-olds, the ones we like to think of as our typical college population, are chiefly concerned with leaving home. This involves breaking psychological ties, choosing a career, entering the world of work, and adjusting to life on their own. On a day-to-day basis, they must take the responsibility for managing their time, their home, and whatever stress accompanies the changes that are taking place in their lives now that they are on their own.

Within the 23- to 28-year-old group, we begin to meet students who may be called nontraditional. The primary concern of this age group is becoming an adult. Generally, this involves getting settled in a career and selecting a mate. It may also involve becoming a parent and/or homeowner. As they accept career and family obligations, the students in this age group find that their opportunities for study and contemplation have shrunk considerably.

Catch-30 is the title McCoy gives to the stage that includes adults from 29 through 34. These young adults must respond to increasing demands from careers and growing children. The student in this age group may have to study while waiting for a child to finish a ballet lesson or while in the air en route to a business meeting. A mother may, in fact, decide to set aside her own homework to help her child solve a difficult arithmetic problem. Because this stage of life is associated with a reappraisal of relationships and a search for personal values, a major life change accompanied by a return to school may occur.

The tendency to reassess and reexamine seems to become intensified during the years between 35 and 43. This period, the midlife reexamination, is generally an unsettling time as marriage, work, and personal priorities and values are critically reviewed and sometimes abandoned. The student in this age group, who may be adjusting once again to single life after a difficult divorce, will probably find life further complicated by demands from teenaged children and aging parents. Returning to school to prepare for a career different from the

one rejected adds another source of stress to an already troublesome period.

The years between 44 and 55 are years of restabilization. Financial demands made by college-age children and ailing parents are somewhat offset by the increased leisure time that accompanies the "empty nest." There is a general turning outward toward more social life and community concerns. Usually, during this period, adults become aware of the realities of their work and adjust to them. This sometimes means learning to live with ambitions that will never be realized. Divorce is another reality that some members of this group will face. During those years, adults are likely to begin to select courses as much to fill their increased leisure time as to improve their job-related skills.

The trend toward leisure and avocational interests continues in the years from 56 through 64, when preparation for retirement becomes an overriding concern. Chronic and/or acute health problems become more prevalent during this period, and the married adult may have to adjust to the loss of a mate. Weinstock (83) believes that an increase in early retirement will make this age group "a natural constituency for late-in-life education" (p. 22).

At present, the number of retired persons in the U. S. very nearly equals the entire population of Canada (Emerging Issues, 23). Even though retirement may mean a reduction in income, status, and influential affiliations, and a probable reduction of energy (Weinstock, 83), there are positive aspects to life after retirement at age 65. These include more leisure time and a search for new achievement outlets.

An emerging new group is beginning to attract attention nationally. This group, which includes the last two developmental stages, is called the young-old and includes those people between 55 and 75 who are more like their younger than their older counterparts with respect to health, income from earnings, marital status, family relations, and education. In 1975, of all Americans who travelled abroad, some 30% were over 55; they spent $26.6 billion, over a third of the total amount of money spent abroad by all Americans (Weinstock, 83, p. 43). Madison Avenue is well aware of the potential market represented by the young-old. It would also seem that they, with their penchant for travelling abroad, constitute a natural public for foreign language courses.

It is difficult to determine how many students from each developmental stage are now enrolled in higher education, because most colleges and universities simply group together all students over 25--or even 23 in some cases--under the rubric nontraditional. Figures from the University of South Carolina, with a total student population of 24,342, show the largest increases in the 25-34 age group, followed by the 35-44 age group. Very few students over 45 show up in these sta-

tistics, which include only students pursuing degrees, diplomas, or certificates (Denham, 18).

We would expect to find a larger proportion of students over 45 in community colleges and continuing education programs, which have typically regarded older learners as an important part of their constituency. Hay (36) reports that at the City Literary Institute, an adult education center in London, there are approximately equal numbers of students from the various age categories (under 25, 25-35, 35-45, 45-55, and over 55). Daytime classes at City Lit attract mostly retired people; civil servants, office workers, and professionals make up most of the lunch-time classes; and evening classes are populated chiefly by members of the younger groups.

The Nontraditional Student as a Language Learner

Many educators seem to expect the nontraditional student to rescue higher education or at least to "help defuse the enrollment time bomb set to go off in 1980" (Weinstock, 83). Some, focussing short-sightedly on just how quickly they can move older students into seats left vacant by the prime college population, seem to assume that such a change can be effected with a minimum of difficulty and that things will continue much as they always have. Specialists in adult education caution, however, that this will not be the case and insist that many of our present educational practices and technologies are unsuitable for teaching mature adults. They distinguish between pedagogy, which means to teach children, and andragogy, which means to teach adults (Vacca and Walker, 80) and find important differences in the assumptions underlying each.

While all areas of higher education will no doubt be called upon to make certain changes in their programs in order to meet the needs of an older student population, it is probable that departments of foreign languages will be among those that will change the most significantly. Since the National Defense Education Act of 1958, foreign language departments have generally moved away from an emphasis on reading and grammar toward an emphasis on speaking and listening, or at least toward a "balanced skills approach," in which oral and written work receive equal time. Whether the method is cognitive, direct, audiolingual, or eclectic, oral production is an important goal of basic language instruction. Thus, the 45-year-old students in our classes will no doubt be expected to perform the same linguistic tasks and achieve the same objectives as their younger classmates.

Whether or not this is a fair expectation might be contested by those who believe that adults--and particularly older adults--are poor language learners. This is a widespread belief held by laymen and by many teachers and researchers as well. Penfield's studies of hemisphere lateralization in the

1960s seemed to support the idea of an optimal--or even critical --age for language learning (Scovel, 68). Lenneberg (48), too, has argued that after puberty, it is only the exceptional adult who can learn a language well enough to speak without errors. Scovel points out that while almost everyone learns the sound patterns of a language perfectly as a child, almost no one can learn the sound patterns of a language perfectly as an adult, and concludes that "in the proper environment, children can learn to speak a second language with the complete fluency of a native speaker; adults cannot" (p. 245). Two recent case studies involving adult learners aged 33 and 25 (Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann, 1; Snapiro, 71) focus on the difficulties of adults in acquiring English syntax and morphology; the latter is entitled "The Non-Learning of English: Case Study of an Adult."

While the optimal age hypothesis is widely supported, it has not gone unchallenged. Krashen (45) has documented hemisphere lateralization as occurring by age five, and Hill (37) has shown evidence from various culture groups where second language learning at the level of native speaker competence is an expected fact for adults, necessary for marriage and/or business. Ausubel (7), admitting that children have an advantage over adults in pronunciation, concludes that adults are better language learners because of their larger vocabularies and ability to deal with grammatical principles. This contention has received support from a study by Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (72), who found that in a natural setting, adults were better learners of morphology and syntax than children, although not as good as teenagers. Ervin-Tripp (24), too, contends that teenagers are the best acquirers of syntax, that adults are the best vocabulary learners, and that children around ages seven or eight are most successful in mastering phonology (p. 202). Having reviewed all studies involving age, rate, and eventual language attainment, Krashen et al. (47) have come to the following conclusion: "Adults and older children in general initially acquire the second language faster than young children (older-is-better for rate of acquisition), but child second-language acquirers will usually be superior in terms of ultimate attainment (younger-is-better in the long run)" (p. 574). It is doubtful that even this carefully thought out conclusion will bring to an end the hotly debated issue of adults versus children as second language learners.

Even though the question of a critical period for second language acquisition is germane to a discussion of the nontraditional foreign language learner, we must keep in mind that many of the studies cited on both sides are based upon natural language acquisition rather than upon the artificial language learning of the classroom. As von Elek and Oskarsson (82) have pointed out, "All attempts to apply experience and knowledge from 'natural' language acquisition to the field of language teaching, i.e., the artificial way of developing language pro-

ficiency, must be met with suspicion" (p. 50). In their own study of foreign language learners in an artificial setting, they found that those students over age 25 had higher results on a verbal aptitude test than did their younger counterparts and that there was no significant difference between the lower (under 25), middle (26-40), and upper (41+) groups with respect to increase in learning grammar during the experiment (p. 192). They did find, however, that with increasing age, performance on tests involving auditory discrimination and oral production decreased (p. 178).

On the basis of the studies summarized above, we might hypothesize that the typical college-age student would be likely to outperform the older adult in programs that focus almost exclusively on listening and speaking, but that in a balanced skills approach, the older adults could achieve well by making the most of their extensive vocabulary and knowledge of grammatical principles. The fact remains, however, that we have precious little research to support such guesses. Our discussion of the nontraditional language learner is further complicated by the fact that for most foreign language teachers and researchers, the dividing line between childhood and adulthood has traditionally been the onset of puberty. Thus, very little information is available that would indicate whether a 16-year-old is more likely to be a successful classroom language learner than a 60-year-old. To shed light on this question, we shall put aside for the moment studies of language acquisition in particular and turn to studies that treat general learning ability as a function of the aging process.

Age and Learning Ability

Krashen (46) has suggested that the unconscious processes by means of which the child acquires language be referred to as language acquisition in order to distinguish them from the conscious language learning of the adult. If the processes are, indeed, dissimilar, and if the latter involves conscious learning strategies, we should be able to increase our knowledge of language learning over time by examining studies of general intelligence involving different age groups. In approaching the following discussion, however, the reader should keep in mind that while the focus here is on general learning characteristics, the heterogeneous adult population will include exceptions to every rule.

According to Thorndike, learning efficiency peaks in the early- to mid-twenties and then declines a little less than one percent per year up to age 45 or 50 (Hand, 34, p. 114). Cross-sectional studies using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale have shown peak learning at age 24 followed by a decline beginning after 30 and continuing as a straight line function into old age. More rapid losses occur on performance subtests

than on tests of verbal ability (Eisdorfer, 20, p. 241). This may parallel the finding by Himwich and Himwich, cited by Knox (43), that brain weight increases until about age 30, declines slightly for a few years, and then declines at an accelerating rate into old age. The rather depressing view of the relationship of age to general learning ability presented by the above studies should be revised in the light of more recent longitudinal studies, which compare an individual with himself over time. A review of these indicates a high degree of stability between 20 and 50 years of age and even beyond (p. 415).

A plausible explanation of this learning stability can be found by analyzing the factors that appear to contribute significantly to potential learning ability. Four second-order factors that have emerged from such analyses are speed, visualization, fluid intelligence, and crystallized intelligence. Fluid intelligence, associated with neurophysiology, tends to peak during adolescence and to decline gradually during adulthood. Crystallized intelligence, linked to acculturation, increases gradually throughout the adult years. The theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence suggests that general learning ability during adulthood can remain relatively stable, as the older person increasingly compensates for the loss of fluid intelligence by greater reliance on crystallized intelligence (Knox, 43).

The relationship of these two types of intelligence to language learning can be better understood by a more complete definition of each. Fluid intelligence, which will probably be on the decline in the case of the nontraditional student, involves the ability to perceive complex relations, engage in short-term memory, form concepts, and engage in abstract reasoning. Those properties of fluid intelligence that might be expected to come into play in the language classroom are rote memorization, the ability to learn through analogy, and verbal reasoning. Crystallized intelligence, on the other hand, is believed to be related to vocabulary knowledge, general information, social situations, reading comprehension, and mathematical reasoning. In the case of the foreign language learner, the same task--learning a set of vocabulary items, for example--might be approached and mastered in different ways by different students, depending upon the proportion of fluid to crystallized intelligence. Young adults with efficient short-term memory might rely on rote learning, whereas older learners would use their superior native language vocabulary to compensate for a deficiency in short-term memory. No doubt a combination of the two strategies would result in optimal retention.

Closely associated with the concept of crystallized intelligence is the factor of speed or pace. A consistent finding of researchers concerning the aging process is the slowing down or diminution of behavior (Agruso, 1). Reaction speed, after peaking at about age 20, declines during middle and old age

(Knox, 43, p. 287). Here it is important to recall that the general learning stability made possible by increased reliance upon crystallized intelligence was determined through performance on untimed tests. Additional studies have found that when the speed factor is removed from learning tasks, the difference in learning power between young and old is greatly reduced (Hand, 34, pp. 114-15). This fact may be overlooked or underrated, since higher education "traditionally equates speed of performance and recall with ability to master content" (Hamelster and Hickey, 33). For example, a halting response to a foreign language question may be taken as evidence of lack of mastery when, in fact, it is only evidence of a general slowing down of speech, a process that begins in middle age. Almost any adult is able to learn any subject, given sufficient time and attention (Knox, 43, pp. 285, 314).

Just as older learners may use crystallized intelligence to compensate for decreasing fluid intelligence, they may tend to compensate for decreasing speed with increased attentiveness and accuracy. In fact, this tendency, which would normally be regarded as positive, may, if carried to an extreme, result in a lack of flexibility, an even slower reaction time, or no response at all (they may be so concerned with an errorless performance that they refuse to attempt the task). Thus, in a foreign language class, nontraditional students might fail to answer an oral question not because of lack of ability but because they (1) did not have time to process the question, (2) did not have time to formulate an answer, and/or (3) were afraid of making a mistake and thus appearing ridiculous.

While a decline in learning rate--though not learning power--is associated with age, this relationship may vary greatly among individuals. Substantial evidence indicates that--at least through the first six decades of life--as people grow older, they become increasingly different from one another (Knox, 43, p. 11). Thus, a group of people in their 50s will be much more different from each other than will a group of people in their 20s. In addition, there are many factors other than age per se that affect learning. Most important among these are physical condition, social class, personality, recency of educational experience (Knox), and level of education (Roumani, 64). Therefore, many older people are likely to experience only a moderate waning of general learning ability and, given appropriate instructional conditions, successful language learning is a real possibility for them.

To summarize, we have seen that in a very broad way, learning in general and language learning in particular can be affected by the proportion of fluid to crystallized intelligence and by reaction time, both of which are related generally to the aging process. In the following section, more specific aspects of cognitive development will be examined and related to language learning.

The Role of Visual and Auditory Impairment in Learning

Knox (43) identifies as components of information processing "attention, memory, practice and reinforcement, interference, pacing, transfer, and incidental learning" (p. 432). It is obvious that most--if not all--of these factors are influenced by the senses, particularly sight and hearing. For this reason, it will be helpful to examine the physiological changes that may help or hinder information processing in older adults.

Visual acuity, which peaks at about age 18, declines gradually but steadily until age 45. There is a decrease in the rate of decline beyond 55 (Hand, 34, p. 107); by age 65, however, half the population has 20/70 vision or less, and many elderly people perceive even bright colors as faded (Weinstock, 83, p. 97). Happily, most vision problems can be solved by the use of corrective lenses and proper illumination. Knox (43) suggests as further compensation for deteriorating visual acuity "longer exposure time, combined audio and visual presentation, simplified sequences of information, and increased time for adaptation between lighted and darkened surroundings" (p. 314).

While visual impairment--especially when uncorrected--may have a detrimental effect on learning, there is, according to Eisdorfer, a more direct relationship between impaired hearing and information processing (Weinstock, 83, p. 98). With age comes a decline both in auditory acuity, which peaks between 10 and 14 years of age (incidentally the so-called critical age for language learning), and in the processing of oral information (Kowalski and Cargemi, 44, p. 205). A U.S. National Health Survey showed that while 85% of children between the ages of 5 and 14 have normal hearing, only 12% of those over 65 can make this claim (Hand, 34, p. 108). Thus, the ability to hear very soft sounds and sounds of very high frequency begins to decline in adolescence; the rate of hearing impairment increases gradually until the 50s, when there is an abrupt increase followed by an even sharper climb beginning at around age 70. The impairment of pitch discrimination is more common among men than in women, especially after age 50 (Knox, 43), but both suffer from a slowing down of the central auditory processes. Even older adults with little or no hearing loss find it difficult to follow rapid speech (Hand, 34, pp. 108-19).

Hearing aids, less satisfactory than eyeglasses in reducing sensory impairment, should be supplemented by lipreading. Key words should be written on the chalkboard. Teachers of older adults should also attempt to speak slowly and distinctly and to eliminate outside noises as much as possible, since older adults experience difficulty in screening out interfering noises.

The effect of hearing impairment on learning a foreign language must certainly be complicated and intensified by the unfamiliar code, which may be perceived as meaningless, and

particularly by unanticipated rhythms, pitches, and intonation patterns. Furthermore, recent research (Nord, 57; Gary, 27; Potovsky, 60; Asher, 3, 4) points to listening comprehension as the key to successful foreign language learning. If this is true and if we are teaching older learners, we will no doubt need to develop materials and techniques designed to compensate for losses both in auditory acuity and in speech processing.

Information Processing, Problem Solving, and the Older Learner

The processing of information by learners requires on their part an active search for meaning and an attempt to integrate the new learning into their current competence. This may be a particularly difficult task for middle-aged or elderly foreign language learners, especially if they are attempting to learn a foreign language for the first time or if their first foreign language experience involved an approach radically different from the one employed by their present instructor. According to Knox (43), older learners who discover a lack of fit between their current understandings and expectations, and new information presented in the classroom, will either accept this fact as a challenge and rise to it, distort the new information to minimize the lack of fit between expectations and reality, or simply withdraw from the learning situation. The implications of these choices for foreign language teachers are clear. The most successful older foreign language learners will be those who can integrate their past experience with the new material with which they are working. Eisenstein (21), for example, found that childhood bilingualism enabled adults to learn subsequent languages more easily.

This process of combining new and old learning could be expected to enhance memory--a key element in foreign language learning--provided that the new information is properly registered and encoded. We find, however, that an increased registration deficit, linked particularly to impaired visual and auditory ability, is associated with aging. (Higher pitched sounds, for example, may not be registered at all by adult males.) Retention of a registered stimulus is closely related to meaningfulness. Material perceived as being nonsensical--the meaningless repetition of unrelated phrases, for example--is subject to rapid decay, particularly among older learners who must rely more on crystallized than fluid intelligence. Retrieval of stored information is another memory factor enhanced by the meaningfulness of the material. Recall declines significantly from young adulthood on, except among persons of high verbal ability. It is interesting to note that the errors in recall by older adults tend to be errors of omission rather than errors of commission (Knox, 43). This finding may be colored by the tendency of older learners to withhold responses of which they are unsure.

Memory may be enhanced by helping the learner organize material, by providing summaries, by reviewing frequently, and by encouraging frequent but spaced practice (a must for older learners). In their study of adult paired-associate learning (not very different from the learning of vocabulary lists), Calhoun and Gounard (10) found that optimal performance occurred when (1) meaningfulness was increased, (2) pacing was controlled by the learner, and (3) repeated practice trials were given. These procedures tend to offset the registration deficit as well as interference from other learning, both of which increase with age and are known to affect memory adversely.

In addition to the processing, storing, and retrieval of information, foreign language learning involves a certain amount of problem solving. These processes are, of course, closely interrelated, as memory plays an important role in one's reaction to novel situations. Cross-sectional studies show a gradual decline of problem-solving ability with age (Knox, 43, p. 445). Specifically, rather than seeking a new solution to a novel problem, older adults tend to search their repertoire of "solutions to problems" in the hope that one will fit. In contrast with young adults, who will modify their strategy when they see that it is unproductive, older adults will very often persist in repeating nonproductive efforts to solve a problem. The solution they choose will be closely linked to the matter of cognitive style. If they are basically scanners, they will tend to read a passage for general meaning, whereas if their cognitive style involves focussing, they will want to know the meaning of every word.

Language acquisition theory suggests that the matter of cognitive style may be of great importance to teachers of adult learners. In recent years, the theory of a biologically based critical age for language learning has been called into question by researchers who claim that a critical period based on cognitive rather than biological development accounts for the difficulties that some adults have in learning a second language (Shapira, 71). "Within this framework the cognitive and social changes brought on by the onset of formal operations[1] are seen to cause adult language learning difficulties" (Schumann, 67, p. ix). Cognitive styles usually develop by the age of 12 and remain rather stable over the years.

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[1] Formal operations is one of Piaget's proposed stages of development. It occurs roughly between ages 11 and 15. More is known about the sensory motor stage and the stage of concrete operations than about the stage of formal operations, but much investigation into this stage of development is currently taking place.

Affective Variables and the Older Learner

We have identified certain cognitive and psychomotor factors associated with learning in general--and with language learning in particular--that seem to be adversely affected by the general slowing down that accompanies aging. While it has been useful to analyze these factors apart from affective considerations, this distinction does not exist in the classroom, where every interaction involves affective as well as cognitive and psychomotor variables. Indeed, we have seen that lack of response may be primarily attributable not to insufficient knowledge or to the slowing of speech but to fear of failure.

Stevick (76) has identified four sources of alienation, each of which is capable of causing considerable pain to the language learner: (1) the boundary between culture groups, i.e., the learner's own and that of the speakers of the other language; (2) the boundary that separates the ignorant, powerless, and evaluated learner from the all-knowing, powerful, and evaluating teacher; (3) the boundary between the learner and his fellow students, frequently complicated by his trying to please the other students as well as the teacher; and (4) the boundary between two aspects of the learner's self: the self that performs and the self that observes and criticizes the performance (pp. 227-28). In the following discussion, we shall see how each of these sources of alienation is intensified in the case of the adult learner.

The boundary between culture groups, a primary source of alienation according to Stevick, received considerable attention from Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann (11) in their investigation of the natural acquisition of English negatives and interrogatives by native speakers of Spanish. In a subsequent article, Schumann (76) explored three possible explanations for the pidginized speech of one 33-year-old subject of this investigation and concluded that the pidginization resulted chiefly from the factors of social and psychological distance.

Aspects of psychological distance are language shock, culture shock, motivation, and ego permeability, while social distance may involve such issues as political, cultural, technical, and economic dominance, nondominance, or subordination. (Since college students are not actually in the country whose language they are studying, we might guess that the notions related to psychological distance are more pertinent to this discussion than are those of social distance, although the latter should not be discounted completely.)

Gardner and Lambert (26) have distinguished between instrumental motivation, where the goal is mere survival, and integrative motivation, where the goal is identification with the other culture group. They have further theorized that if language aptitude is held constant, those students who have an integrative motivation will be more successful language learners. One

factor related to integrative motivation may be ego permeability, i.e., the ability to give up partially and temporarily one's separateness of identity (Schumann, 67). Taylor et al. (79), for example, found a strong positive correlation between empathy and the ability to imitate foreign language sounds. It is here that age becomes a factor. According to Schumann (66), "as a person gets older, language shock and culture shock are likely to be more severe, the development of an integrative motivation is likely to be greatly reduced" (p. ix). Strong integrative motivation is, of course, no guarantee of successful performance by an older foreign language learner, but the absence of it (as in the case of students who are required to take a language to fulfill a degree requirement) may, given the less-than-ideal cognitive and psychomotor characteristics likely to be present, increase the chances for failure.

A feeling of alienation from the culture whose language is being studied may be shared by both the immigrant who is trying to acquire a second language on the streets and the college student who is trying to learn a foreign language in the classroom. For the latter, however, the classroom itself may appear to be an alien land, and this is no doubt especially true of the older learner. Interestingly enough, it is here that the question of social distance may come into play. In a typical college classroom, there is usually no doubt concerning dominance and subordination: the teacher is clearly in charge. This dominance can easily be sustained by faculty with students of younger age and lower social status; however, in a situation where faculty and students approach equal age and social status, as in the case of adult education, "a foundation is laid for violation of personal space as well as social role conflict and confusion, which can result in an educational impasse" (David, 17, p. 29).

David sees the dominance-subordinance issue as one factor in the well-documented phenomenon of full-time faculty resistance to adult higher education. He further theorizes that faculty, caught up in the present youth culture, view the older student as a threat to the college environment, which they regard--consciously or unconsciously--as a fountain of youth. Terms used to describe adult students (part-time, night, nontraditional) set them apart from the legitimate college student and may result in different treatment from the teacher. While David's remarks are concerned with faculty reluctance to teach in programs specifically designated as adult education or continuing education, the same hostility may be present--and perhaps to an even greater degree--in a typical beginning language class. The enemy has invaded!

Complicating the student-teacher relationship in the case of the adult student is the students' own loss of status as they assume the student role. The very term <u>student</u> in our society is youth oriented and thus, for an adult, to become a

student represents a kind of regression. A business executive taking German during her lunch hour may feel confused and humiliated when her young teacher, not a day older than her own daughter, asks her if she has brushed her teeth that morning. Even the desk that she is sitting at, so different from her own back at the office, makes her feel unimportant as well as uncomfortable. Being an "ignorant, powerless, and evaluated learner" is not easy at any age, but it is particularly difficult for a mature adult. As Rivers (62) points out:

> Over long years, he has been conditioned... to be ashamed of behaving like an infant. Now he is asked to do just that: to practice strange sounds, to fumble about with strange words and modes of expression, to follow blindly the lead of the teacher, and to lay aside his well trained habits of thinking for himself.

Walking the thin line between pleasing the teacher and pleasing one's classmates is a difficult art and one that will have been forgotten by many older students returning to or entering college. The primary preoccupation of these students in regard to their classmates, however, is saving face. Guntermann (32) reports that older Peace Corps volunteers learning Spanish showed great concern over the possibility of being seen as "dumb and doddering" by younger trainees. This has sometimes resulted in unacceptable behavior on the part of the volunteers. Certainly, the desire to be perceived favorably by both classmates and teacher could be expected to inhibit regression and increase anxiety.

This brings us to Stevick's fourth type of alienation, that of the observing self from the performing self. Stevick (74) sees regression as a valuable tool for those who can achieve it, and Green (28) contends that both psychological and linguistic regression are integral to the language-learning process. We can speculate that the critical, observing self may view such regression as somewhat ridiculous, if not threatening, and thus try to block "childish" behavior. Green suggests that the extreme anxiety associated with regression may be attenuated if the teacher discusses the phenomenon with the students in an open but sensitive manner. While this is not a perfect solution, it could perhaps relieve some of the student's conscious anxiety and thereby increase receptivity to regression.

Another well documented cause of anxiety in older learners is fear of failure. Hand (34) believes that the old suffer more than the young from the frustration that accompanies failing--a belief seconded by Roumani (64), who suggests that during the middle years, the balance gradually shifts from the desire for success to the fear of failure. Eisdorfer (20), too, sees a shift among adults from the aggressive "need to achieve" to the more defensive "fear of failure." He postulates, furthermore,

that the response inhibition associated with fear of failure may be a crucial variable in the apparent learning difficulties of older people, since there may be few or no responses available for reinforcement. Foreign language teachers should note that Eisdorfer found response inhibition to be directly related to pace. When the pace is rapid, responses are withheld; when the pace is slower, responses increase.

Curricular Offerings and the Adult Language Learner

We have up to this point been concerned with the physiological, psychological, and sociological characteristics of older language learners. In previous sections, we have seen that the individuals who constitute the nontraditional student population are very different not only from their younger classmates but also from each other. It is, therefore, very difficult to speak of a typical older language learner. For this reason, the following sections will treat curricular offerings, methods, and techniques not from the point of view of one composite nontraditional student but from the point of view of a number of hypothetical representatives of the group.

The student over 25 who is presently enrolled in a college- or university-related beginning- or intermediate-level foreign language program may be enrolled either as an undergraduate student in a four-year college, university, or community college, or in a continuing education program associated with one of the above institutions. He or she may be a full- or part-time student, depending upon home and career responsibilities, and may be attending day, night, weekend, or vacation courses, depending primarily upon work schedule and courses available. The course in question may be a credit or noncredit course and may be part of a traditional liberal arts sequence or a more practical career-oriented or special-purpose course. The student may have enrolled in the course to fulfill a language requirement for an undergraduate degree or to realize a personal goal related to self-improvement or career.

While the present situation as described above may upon first reading appear to embody a great deal of variety and flexibility, quite the contrary is actually true. To illustrate, let us examine the experiences of three adults in different stages of life and with different purposes. The first of these is a businessman who has become aware that he needs oral Spanish to facilitate his work and travel in South America. Calling the state university in his city, he finds that it offers no special course in oral Spanish oriented toward travelers and businessmen. Perhaps he would like to take the regular third-year Spanish conversation course but that, of course, involves a prerequisite of four semesters of college Spanish and is offered only at 10:10 a.m. and 2:20 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday--hours during which he must be at the office. There is nothing

available at night or on weekends. He has had a year of Spanish some years ago and wonders if the second-year program might meet his needs. The answer is that Spanish 201 and 202 constitute a two-semester sequence with an equal emphasis on all skills. Because he is not particularly interested in learning to read and write Spanish and because he does not want to commit himself to two semesters of academic work before getting to a course that he perceives as useful, he decides that he will either hire a tutor or invest in a set of self-instructional language materials.

The businessman was lucky; he had the freedom to choose to enroll in a language course or to accomplish his goal through other means. The nontraditional student who is taking a foreign language course because of a degree requirement does not have that choice. Take, for example, the case of a recently divorced 32-year-old mother of preschool children who is working eight hours a day as a secretary but wants to get a college degree in order to obtain a higher-paying position. She is able to enroll in a beginning language course in the evenings but is dismayed to learn that the language laboratory (attendance is required by her teacher) is open only from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. during the week and is closed on weekends.

Our third adult, like the businessman, has the choice of either taking or not taking a language course. She is a woman in her middle to late sixties, whose husband has died and whose children live in another state. Her decision to take a language course is motivated as much by the desire for companionship as by the fact that she will be going on a European tour the following summer. She is delighted to find that the continuing education branch of her state university will be offering a course in French cooking in which she can learn not only how to make French dishes but also how to pronounce their names. It seems like a course that will offer a great deal of opportunity for socializing, too, because the students (all adults, she assumes) will eat what they cook. Our potential student does not take the course, however. It meets on Mondays from 6:00 to 10:30 p.m., and she is afraid to return home late at night.

The three cases described above, based on actual situations, illustrate the lack of fit between an extremely heterogeneous adult population and a still somewhat monolithic system of higher education.

Continuing education programs that give CEUs rather than college credits are, in part for that reason alone, more flexible and diversified than programs offered by institutions whose offerings must be taken for regular academic credit. Directors of such programs have great freedom in scheduling, selection of program site, and engagement of personnel. A course in French cooking might, for example, be taught by a French restauranteur on Monday evenings in his restaurant, which is closed all that day. Continuing education courses are generally organized

around interests and may involve cultural (German literature in translation) as well as linguistic (Italian for travelers) offerings related to foreign languages. Kalfus (41) reports on a series of very successful conversational language courses offered through the Continuing Education Division of St. Louis Community College at Meramec. These courses meet two hours weekly for 12 evening sessions.

Although flexible and interest-centered, continuing education courses have some shortcomings. Since they are often scheduled in the evenings to accommodate working people, the elderly who fear being out in the evening and at night may be excluded. Weekend and vacation programs such as Elderhostel, a consortium of colleges and universities that sponsors week-long minicourses in the summer, do cater to the elderly but in most cases do not provide an ideal schedule for foreign language instruction. One attractive departure from the norm is a two-week intensive Spanish course offered by Southern Illinois University at Carbondale as part of their Elderhostel program. Another very satisfactory means of making foreign language instruction available to the elderly is described by Kalfus (41), who outlines a special course taught during the daytime at a leisure center for senior citizens. No doubt the exclusion of the elderly from continuing education language courses is a problem that can be solved with the right combination of imagination and good intentions, but there are other causes for concern. Adults seriously interested in acquiring language proficiency may find that too much socialization goes on in continuing education classes. They may suspect that neither the instructor nor their fellow classmates take the class seriously and thus become disillusioned with their progress or lack thereof. Still another concern to be reckoned with is the reluctance, alluded to earlier, of full-time faculty to participate in continuing education programs. This may result in a course taught by a native speaker who has no professional training as a language teacher. For the adult who wishes to obtain college credit in a foreign language, the continuing education courses may not, in many cases, be an option. The continuing education program, though sponsored by a college and to some extent staffed by college faculty, is not usually thought of as higher education per se, but rather as a service offered by the college to the community.

Moving along a continuum, we find that the regular community college program has a somewhat less flexible language curriculum than does a program given through a continuing education center. Lester and Tamarkin (50), however, point to a trend in these institutions away from a basic liberal arts transfer policy and toward the development of a terminal two-year career program. While the main concern of many language departments of these institutions remains that of providing the student with easily transferable traditional courses, some have

begun to develop special language courses for policemen, hospital workers, social service personnel, and business employees. Liston (51) sees military people, people in government service, scientists, and public service clerks as potential consumers of career-oriented foreign language courses. To this list one could add those involved in the tourist industry such as travel agents and hotel and restaurant personnel.

An example of a community college that has attempted to meet career needs is Manchester Community College in Connecticut, which offers a successful two-semester program in career Spanish. Prepared by Toby Tamarkin (50), the course has three focal points: medical careers, public service careers, and business careers. Four-year institutions in the state have agreed to award full credit at the second-year level for completion of the course, which is given in the evening to accommodate working people. Any student or member of the community with two years of high school Spanish or a year of college Spanish may enroll.

Courses of this type can serve as models for community colleges that seek to accommodate adult students with specific occupational goals. Since statistics show that many people return to college because of a major transition such as a career change, a natural constituency may be there. The community should, of course, be surveyed for occupational needs and opportunities before such a course is planned. Scheduling should be in the evening if possible, as most of these adults work full time (Wireman, 84).

It would be an oversimplification to state that only short, recreational-type language courses are offered in continuing education programs, that career-oriented courses are offered along with the liberal arts language sequence only in community colleges, and that only liberal arts language courses are offered in four-year college degree programs; yet, in the main, this seems to be the case. With very few exceptions, beginning- and intermediate-level liberal arts language courses are the exclusive offerings available to the nontraditional student at a college or university. If there is any diversity at all, it will probably be in the second-year sequence. As we have seen before, these courses generally claim to be four-skills courses. What actually goes on within this framework will be discussed later.

Just as little effort is made by the four-year colleges and universities to meet specific aims and interests of nontraditional students, they are rarely considered when classes are being scheduled. It is true, of course, that in large universities, courses that make up the basic program are likely to be offered at several hours during the day and perhaps as part of the evening school as well, but this is done primarily to accommodate faculty and traditional students. As mentioned earlier, lunchtime classes, notoriously unpopular with faculty and tradi-

tional students alike, attract civil servants, office workers, and professionals; this fact should be taken into consideration by small colleges with limited offerings. Even if nontraditional students are able to schedule their classes at suitable hours, they may experience a disadvantage if the language laboratory and other support facilities are available only during the prime daytime hours Monday through Friday. Most colleges and universities treat these adult students as "second-class citizens, requiring them to fit the school's programs rather than designing programs to fit them" (Wireman, 84, p. 18A). Wireman contends that a new delivery system will probably be necessary if colleges and universities intend to meet the needs of nontraditional students.

A Curriculum for the Future

In the previous section we examined in a very general way what curricular offerings are now available to the nontraditional learner. As they design programs for the future, foreign language departments should keep in mind not only meeting the needs of the growing numbers of older adults presently enrolled in their courses but also anticipating the needs of potential adult students in the community. To guide curriculum planners, Hameister and Hickey (33, p. 80) have drawn the following distinctions between traditional students continuing in school and nontraditional students returning to school: (1) the learning history of the nontraditional or "new majority" student is strongly influenced by informal rather than formal learning, and he or she may be unfamiliar with the routines and expectations of formal education; (2) in contrast to the full-time student whose primary time commitment is to school, the major time commitment of the part-time student is to job and/or family; (3) the nontraditional student brings to the classroom considerable experience from the world of work but may be lacking in communication and study skills; (4) the microframe of reference of the traditional student facilitates an orderly input of new ideas, whereas the macroframe of reference of the nontraditonal student has both positive and negative implications for the learning process; (5) the nontraditional student, as opposed to the traditional student whose major goal is often the attainment of the baccalaureate degree, frequently has clear vocational goals; (6) while the traditional student values speed of performance and competitiveness, the nontraditional student is more concerned with concept mastery and accuracy of performance; (7) in contrast to the traditional student, who seeks higher academic grades as a means to obtain employment, the nontraditional student, who is probably already employed, is not particularly concerned with grades; and finally, (8) while traditional students have a clear idea of how they compare with the academic performance of their fellow students (a "B" student, for

example), nontraditional students have no accurate basis on which to judge their academic potential.

It would seem, then, that traditional and nontraditional students are more different than alike. To complicate the situation for curriculum planners, nontraditional students are also very different from each other. They differ greatly in age, educational level, ability, motivation, and experience. While there is no easy formula for the ideal program for older learners, the concept of "lifelong learning" may offer guidance for the revitalization of higher education. This "cradle to grave" concept of education has received considerable government support through the provisions of the Education Outreach Program and the Age Discrimination Act (1979).

Elling (22) has defined lifelong learning as "the process by which, in and out of school, individuals continue to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes over their lifetime" (p. 106). Education is thus "a seamless continuum in which both para-curricular and curricular offerings are intertwined and linked administratively by infinite entry-exit-reentry opportunities" (Shane and Weaver, 70, p. 3). Strasheim (77) has outlined a number of changes which, if implemented, could contribute significantly to lifelong foreign language learning. These are

- providing an infinite variety of both credit and noncredit offerings;
- moving away from "standard sequences" and moving into a diversification of curricula;
- considering language study as a vehicle rather than as an end in itself;
- restructuring language experiences to fit the learner rather than expecting the school to restructure itself to meet the requirements of foreign language teachers;
- working with individualization, small groups, simulation and gaming;
- employing a variety of learning modes and using a variety of materials; and
- assisting students in planning their studies accordingly pp. 33-34).

The heterogeneity of the adult population offers a challenge for imaginative curriculum planners. To limit curricular offerings only to language study would be to ignore the many older adults whose interests and abilities may be better suited to courses of a cultural nature, dealing perhaps with films,

foods, or music. Let us not forget either that older students, with their sense of history, may be more receptive than their younger classmates to courses dealing with historical personages and eras.

Methods, Procedures, and the Nontraditional Student

Earlier in this paper we examined recent research findings concerning adult language acquisition in particular and learning by adults in general. These findings, while interesting in their own right, become even more valuable when considered from the perspective of methods and procedures employed currently at the college and university levels.

In their study of methodological trends in college foreign language instruction, Benseler and Schulz (8) have described and summarized four approaches that have had a major influence on present-day foreign language teaching, and several other methodologies that are being practiced, or experimented with, on a relatively small scale. Those identified as having had the greatest influence on current teaching practices are the grammar/translation method, the audiolingual method, the cognitive method, and the direct method. An examination of the assumptions and practices of these four methodologies, then, should bring to light areas of compatibility and/or incompatibility between them and the nontraditional learner.

Their review of available instructional material has led Benseler and Schulz to conclude that "most college foreign language programs apparently utilize a modified audiolingual approach with emphasis on the development of all four language skills" (p. 93). This method, which is based on contrastive linguistics and behaviorist psychology, in its purest form stresses the primacy of the spoken word in an attempt to achieve native-like pronunciation and fluency. Material is presented first orally at normal speed and only later in writing; in some cases, there is a lengthy prereading period. Oral material, often in dialogue form, is mimicked and then memorized by the students, who may subsequently be asked to recite it once again at normal speed. Before continuing with other features of the method, let us review these basic procedures with the older learner in mind.

The Audiolingual Method

An unseen oral dialogue can, depending on its use by the individual teacher, provide a meaningful context for the learning of structure and vocabulary. Withholding a native language translation of the dialogue will probably, however, reduce meaningfulness for the adult, who may be less apt than the younger student at guessing at meaning from visuals, props, and gestures used to illustrate the dialogue. The extent to

which adult learners are able to memorize and recite dialogues will be in direct proportion to their meaningfulness, which has been shown to affect both retention and retrieval. Recitation of memorized material before other members of the class will no doubt add to the anxiety and fear of failure of the older learner, and one can well imagine that assuming the role of a teenager will not be to the liking of a 50-year-old grandmother.

While memorizing and reciting dialogues would seem to be an unreasonable--if not impossible--demand to place upon older learners in a classroom setting, the practice of learning grammar inductively through pattern drills and generalizations would no doubt meet with even less success. As fluid intelligence declines and crystallized intelligence expands, the adult becomes increasingly less able to learn through analogy and, therefore, more dependent upon analysis. Depriving adult learners of linguistic rules and/or principles may limit their chances for successful acquisition of grammar. This is one of the findings of a study done in Sweden in the early 1970s by von Elek and Oskarsson (82, p. 199). They found, too, that adults very much disliked the pattern practice that is an integral part of the inductive approach to grammar (p. 200). This may be due in part to the fact that the snappy, fast-paced tempo recommended for drill practice is virtually impossible for the adult learner who "often finds difficulties in imitating and forming new sounds and utterances and ... will often need a long period of laborious effort before he can accurately reproduce what he has heard." Von Elek and Oskarsson contend that "many fast pattern practice programs intended for adolescents are... quite unusable at the adult level" (p. 206). The display-session class, in which students practice rapidly and without error (error=sin) the oral material with which they are working, probably increases the already high anxiety and fear of failure of the adult learner, who is constantly called upon to perform and is corrected immediately for the slightest slip of the tongue. Furthermore, the audiolingual emphasis on structure and concomitant deemphasis of vocabulary deprive adults of making the most of what may be their strong suit as language learners (Ervin-Tripp, 24, p. 202; Ausubel, 7, p. 420).

We may conclude, then, with Ausubel that certain of the major features of audiolingualism are incompatible with successful language learning in a classroom setting. In a 1964 article, he listed as inappropriate for adults "the rote learning of phrases, inductive learning of grammar, avoidance of the native language, the prior presentation of materials in spoken form, ... and the 'natural speed rendition' of the second language" (p. 420). The modified audiolingual method prevalent in higher education today will be successful with nontraditional students to the extent that these modifications include procedures that enhance meaningfulness, bring into play older learners' ability to learn through analysis, encourage adults to draw upon their

extensive native language vocabulary, maintain an equal balance among the four skills, and minimize near-native pronunciation and speed of delivery. Some provision for allowing older learners to manipulate the rate of listening comprehension materials would also be a desirable modification.

Although there appears to be a serious incompatibility between the assumptions and procedures of the audiolingual method and what we know about adult learning, von Elek and Oskarsson (82) found that adults did learn with their implicit, basically audiolingual, method. Their progress was, however, significantly less than that of students whose instruction was based upon cognitive code theory.

The Cognitive Method

As Benseler and Schulz point out, the objectives of the cognitive method are similar to those of the audiolingual method, even though the underlying assumptions and procedures are different. Rejecting the point of view that languages must be learned inductively through analogy, the cognitive method favors a conscious analysis of linguistic phenomena. The von Elek-Oskarsson study, which involved six classes of adults learning English at the School for Adults in Gothenburg, Sweden, found that the experimental, cognitive treatment produced significantly higher results than the audiolingual method. These cognitive techniques included the explanation of grammar, a deductive presentation of the subject matter, the use of the native language, translation, and contrastive linguistic analysis. While no single experiment (even a replicated one such as this) should be considered proof of a given hypothesis, the results of this study are what would have been predicted by persons familiar with the characteristics of the adult learner. The cognitive method avoids some of the features of audiolingualism most difficult and/or distasteful for adults such as chorally repeated pattern drills and dialogue memorization, while at the same time exploiting the adult's ability to analyze language. Translation should foster meaningfulness and thus retention, the use of the native language should provide security, and a deductive presentation of grammar would be expected to enhance learning by analysis.

The von Elek-Oskarsson study is of particular interest in that the students involved were returning to school after having worked for a while. The mean age of the subjects was 33, but the group included a sizable number of subjects in their 40s and some in their 50s and early 60s. In these respects, they seem to resemble our nontraditional students. For students in this age group, von Elek and Oskarsson recommend in favor of what Carroll (12) has called the cognitive habit-formation method, which consists of a basic cognitive method framework into which certain features of audiolingualism may be fitted.

A significant finding of the work of von Elek and Oskarsson was that the tests that differentiated the age groups most were those that involved oral stimuli or responses. Results on such tests consistently correlated negatively with age (p. 206), i.e., as age increased, performance on tests involving listening and speaking decreased. This may have implications for the objectives and procedures not only of the audiolingual and cognitive methods but also for the direct method, a third method widely used at the undergraduate college level.

The Direct Method

Benseler and Schulz (8) state that "any method which attempts to use the target language exclusively for instruction and interaction in the classroom can be considered a direct method" (p. 89). Features of this method that would appear to be most in conflict with what we know about adult learning are, in addition to avoidance of the native language, inductive learning of grammatical patterns and an emphasis on the oral skills. We might also expect language shock and culture shock, two important affective variables, to be intensified by plunging the student immediately into a native-like environment with a teacher whose language ability is, of necessity, native or near-native. One thinks, too, of Stevick's (76) enumeration of sources of alienation, which includes not only the boundary between culture and language groups but also the boundary between the ignorant learner and the all-knowing teacher. On the more positive side, the avoidance of mechanical pattern drills would seem to make the direct method somewhat less distasteful than the audiolingual method to adults; also, the use of audiovisual materials along with tapes and records would be expected to enhance the registration of information through the use of two sensory channels. Audiovisual materials also provide a meaningful context for structure and vocabulary to be learned as does the question-answer practice that is an important feature of the method. We might speculate that the adult would find childish and unrealistic questions whose answers are obvious, such as "What is this?" or "What color is your blouse?"

The Grammar/Translation Method

While the three methods discussed above have, to a large extent, replaced the grammar/translation method in undergraduate liberal arts courses, grammar and translation are still used in "college reading courses where the major goal is on developing reading comprehension of literary, philosophical, or scientific/technical materials" (Benseler and Schulz, 8, p. 90). The development of the audiolingual method with its aural-oral focus is often seen as a reaction to grammar-translation, which had as its main objectives the skills of reading and writing. Adult learners would no doubt find several features of this method compatible with their abilities. They are not deprived of their native language; the aural-oral skills at which they are least

likely to succeed do not come into play; the two previous factors reduce the role of speed and memory in language learning; and the use of translation not only enhances meaningfulness but also allows them to make good use of their penchant for accuracy. Furthermore, the goal of reading comprehension favors nontraditional students with their well developed vocabularies and the wealth of experience that they can bring to the text. Older learners could be expected to meet with less success on timed reading tests and activities than on those that permit them to set their own pace. An obvious disadvantage of this method, of course, is its limited purpose. Grammar and translation cannot be expected to lead to oral proficiency, and this is precisely what many adults wish to achieve. It is hard to imagine that our businessman who needed oral Spanish for work and travel would settle for a grammar/translation approach.

When we consider these four most widely known methods of instruction, it would seem that for adults whose chief purpose is reading and writing or who have no strong wish to develop the oral skills, the grammar/translation method has much to offer. In theory at least--and this is supported by the von Elek-Oskarsson study--the cognitive method would appear to be most effective for older learners who do not wish to abandon oral work entirely. We would expect the least successful results to be achieved by the direct and the audiolingual methods. Here, several words of caution are in order. First, these are only speculations, and much more experimentation will be needed before we can evaluate with confidence the four methodologies in terms of their success with the adult learner. Second, all four methods have, under certain conditions and with certain learners, achieved positive results. Third, the extreme heterogeneity of adult learners makes generalizations about methodology very difficult, if not dangerous.

Other Methodologies

These same words of warning should be kept in mind as we review several lesser known methodologies that have apparently achieved impressive results, in some cases specifically with older learners. These methodologies have been identified and described by Benseler and Schulz (8), and the reader unfamiliar with them may wish to consult their discussion of each. Included are the confluent approach, community language learning or the counseling-learning model of second language teaching, the psycho-generative method, the silent method, suggestology, and the total physical response method. Of these, several (the confluent approach, community language learning, suggestology) emphasize the affective aspects of language learning as they relate to cognitive considerations. All seem designed to maximize involvement (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) on the part of the learner. Because they have either been developed

for--or used extensively with--adults, community language learning, suggestology, and the total physical response methods merit special consideration.

As Stevick (74) points out, Charles A. Curran, who developed the community language learning method (CLL), for many years "dabbled in adult language full-scale courses as well as brief experiments--for the purpose of testing and developing ideas in his own...field" (p. 259). Since that field is psychological counseling, Curran's method assumes on the part of all human beings a fundamental need to be understood and to be aided in the search to fulfill personal values and goals in community with others. The techniques used by the teacher (or knower) are designed to reduce anxiety on the part of the learner (or client).

As they sit in small groups of 6 to 12, the learners in stage one of the method say aloud native language sentences that are immediately translated into the target language by a teacher, or teachers, outside the circle. The focus, then, is on the learners and on what they wish to say. They do not have to abandon their native language nor do they have to use the simplistic and/or artificial speech characteristic of many first-year texts. In essence, they create their own textbook as they go along. During stages two and three, the learners become progressively independent of the teacher, so that by the time they reach stage four, they are secure enough to accept systematic error correction by the teacher and other group members. The final stage involves free interaction between teacher(s) and learner(s).

The most obvious strength of CLL with respect to adult learners is that it provides them with a feeling of security. This is accomplished not only by the creation of a sense of community among the learners but also by the warm, accepting "counseling attitude" of the teacher and by the manner in which learners gradually abandon their native language. Furthermore, the students no doubt have a personal stake in what is said, since their native language sentences serve as the springboard for discussion. This should increase motivation as well as retention (Stevick, 75). Retention is also aided by written "transcripts" of what has been said.

Even though it has many positive aspects, CLL will probably not be used on a large scale in undergraduate foreign language programs. Ideally, the teacher should be a native speaker of the target language who is also experienced in counseling; at many large universities, however, classes are taught by graduate assistants whose linguistic ability may not be near-native and who are inexperienced not only in counseling but in teaching as well. Still another problem is regression, a necessary stage in the method, which may be "blocked by the learner-client who refuses to regress from the existing native-language self, with its familiar self-image and its tried-and-true defenses"

(Stevick, 74, p. 264). The feasibility of using a modified CLL method is presently being tested at the University of South Carolina by Alber, Laughlin, and Medley. Their findings may shed light on some--although perhaps not all--of the concerns regarding the usefulness of CLL in undergraduate programs.

Suggestology

Superficially at least, suggestology is better known than community language learning; however, many questions remain to be answered about this controversial method of instruction. The feature of suggestology popularized in the media is the so-called "concert session." For this session, students sit in armchairs and listen to baroque music as they hear new vocabulary items spoken in various intonations by the teacher. The two other major components of the method, as summarized by Benseler and Schulz (8) are: (1) review of previously learned materials (exclusively in the target language) utilizing games, skits, and conversation and avoiding mechanistic or manipulative language practice, and (2) presentation of new materials in the context of practical and interesting dialogues, with grammatical explanations and translations into the mother tongue (p. 91). Lozanov (55), the Bulgarian physician-psychotherapist who originated the method, claims that "memorization in learning by the suggestopedic method is accelerated 25 times over that in learning by conventional methods" (p. 13). The scientific experimentation on which these claims are based has, however, been scrutinized and found lacking by Scovel (69), who contends that Lozanov's book contains inadequate, sweeping generalizations based on little or no experimental evidence. Scovel does conclude, however, that certain techniques and procedures of Lozanov's method could be useful to foreign language teachers. Among these are attention to the physical environment (comfortable furniture, classical music), awareness of the possible influence of subliminal messages that exist in every setting, and the use of a new name and identity to help minimize inhibition. Older learners, probably even more than their younger classmates, would find these three features of suggestology very beneficial. If Lozanov's claims concerning memorization can be substantiated, this, too, would be a boon for older language students, who typically experience memory difficulties.

It is interesting that both community language learning and suggestology rely on regression or infantilization to liberate the child, i.e., the good language learner, within each student. Although both methods have been used successfully to teach adults, it is doubtful whether colleges and universities, with their concern for rigor and formal instruction, will eagerly embrace methodologies that have emerged from counseling procedures rather than from one of the traditional academic

disciplines. Furthermore, both methods require special training and perhaps even a special kind of personality on the part of the teacher; not to be overlooked either is the possible negative reaction to regression or infantilization on the part of some students. These factors make it unlikely that we shall see community language learning or suggestopedia employed in the near future on a large scale by institutions of higher education.

Total Physical Response

The total physical response method, developed by Asher (3, 4), does not specifically call for regression or infantilization; yet, because it is based on children's first language acquisition, it does require childlike behavior on the part of the students, who carry out physical commands as instructed by their teacher. Even though the native language is banished from the classroom, except in the case of abstract words that cannot be acted out or pictured, meaningfulness is enhanced by physical involvement of the student in activities such as these described by Asher, Kusudo, and de la Torre (6): "Marie, pick up the picture of the ugly old man and put it next to the picture of the government building" (p. 27) and "When Luke walks to the window, Marie will write Luke's name on the blackboard" (p. 26). In the initial presentation of a command, the instructor--alone or with one or two students--models the action that the students are to imitate. Practice continues until each student has performed the command alone. According to the authors, this is essential for long-term memory (p. 27). Only after much comprehension practice is oral production introduced. Students do eventually speak, however, and perform skits in the target language.

The results of several field tests of the total physical response method have shown that (1) physically responding to commands seems to produce storage in long-term memory; (2) most grammatical features of a language can be taught through combination with the imperative form; (3) listening fluency can be achieved without using the student's native language; and (4) there is a great amount of transfer from listening to the other skills (Asher et al., 6). Of particular interest is the fact that the experimental subjects of the first field test were 11 adult students, ranging in age from 17 to 60, at the Cabrillo Junior College in Aptos, California. Their instruction was offered as an eight-week noncredit course (Asher, 4). Asher does not report anxiety on the part of the learners, nor does he indicate that they had difficulty in processing long commands; indeed, these topics do not appear in his discussion of the experiment. We, therefore, are unable to evaluate confidently the total physical response method with respect to what might have been predicted to be its shortcomings. One can

speculate that the repeated hearing and acting out of the commands may have compensated in some way for the general slowing down of auditory processing characteristic of adults, and the fact that students were not pressured to speak from the beginning of instruction could certainly be a factor in promoting self-confidence. These are, of course, only guesses that may or may not be substantiated by future research involving this technique.

Asher's method, since it does not require a counselor-teacher, may be more easily employed in an academic setting than that of Lozanov or Curran. One can imagine, however, a certain reluctance on the part of some teachers to build a course around commands. Certainly, as Asher and his colleagues point out, a great deal of humor and originality are demanded from the teacher in order to enliven the basic format. The teacher interested in employing the total physical response method would do well to consult Learning Another Language through Actions: The Complete Teacher's Guidebook, in which Asher (5) elaborates this method.

Because they demand such skill and knowledge on the part of the instructor, and because they differ so greatly from traditional academic approaches to learning, community language learning, suggestology, and the total physical response method are probably most suited to programs for adults that provide a great deal of freedom and flexibility, i.e., noncredit, single-section courses in which the instructor involved has received adequate training in the method. Although none of these methods in its purest form is likely to become widely used in the near future in traditional undergraduate college language programs, they have all been found useful in teaching languages to adults and can, thus, be employed to great advantage by the informed eclecticist.

If, for example, we look critically at all three methods, we find that while they appear upon first examination to have little or nothing in common, there are similarities that can be found beneath the surface differences. Teachers of adults may gain insight into their own practices by examining these common elements. First, all three methods developed from psychology and/or biology rather than from linguistics; thus, their focus is on the learner and the learning process rather than on the language per se. Furthermore, all view language learning as a process involving the whole person, a process in which cognitive learning is not separated from affective and/or psychomotor learning. Finally, the child is regarded in each method as a superior language learner; thus, there is an effort to recreate child-like attitudes and/or behavior on the part of the adult learner. One may speculate that Curran, Lozanov, and Asher have found a way to revive and tap in the adult a language acquisition system that has lain dormant for years. If so, their methods may offer hope of a veritable fountain of youth for the adult learner.

Communicative Competence and the Adult Learner

In any discussion of present and future methodologies, it would be incorrect to overlook the impact of communicative competence on current teaching practices. The fact remains, however, that communicative proficiency, defined by Clark (14) as the ability to get a message across to an interlocutor with a specified ease and effect (p. 119), is an objective rather than a method. It does not prescribe whether grammar should be presented deductively or inductively; nor does it deal with such questions as whether or not the native language should be banished from the classroom. Rather, it sets a goal for language instruction. This goal might be met through the total physical response method, the direct method, or suggestology, for example. The fact that classical audiolingualism has not produced students able to communicate in the real world is one of the charges most often levelled at it by its detractors.

Certain activities and exercises have been shown to be more successful than others in achieving communicative competence (Jarvis, 39; Savignon, 65; Joiner, 40). Paulston's (59) definition of a communicative exercise is that it must add new information about the real world; it involves, then, the transmission and reception of a message. This definition is broad enough to cover many types of exercises, from simple question-answer practice to role playing in simulated situations. Communicative activities are based on real-life language use and often involve work in small groups or pairs.

Practical, communicative language activities have been especially well received by adult students, many of whom have a real-world motivation to learn the language. Hay (36), an experienced teacher of older learners in London, feels that "a class devoted to the study of language for the purpose of communication that does not deliberately base its work on the question of real-life inter-student communicational situations is ...an anachronism" (p. 14). Thus, in his classes, where students range in age from 18 to 80, he provides for a great deal of small-group and pair work in meaningful contexts. The material to be learned is based upon communicational needs and pruned of words, phrases, and structures "that the student is not going to use himself, naturally and meaningfully, to the person next to him within the next few weeks" (p. 13).

This immediate application of learned material appears to increase student motivation greatly. The application may involve a recreation of the real world (a restaurant, for example) in the classroom (Carton-Caprio, 13) or the actual participation in a real-life activity such as correspondence with students at another school (Bossi, 9). The great appeal of activities of this type is that students receive an immediate payoff for their participation in language practice and thus are encouraged to continue. If, indeed, as much research has shown,

students learn to do what they do, and fail to learn to do what they do not do, the teacher of adults who aims for communicative competence should include language practice activities that require the student to send and receive messages.

Individualization of Instruction and the Adult Learner

Like the concept of communicative competence, the concept of individualization of instruction has made a significant impact upon college and university teaching. It is not, however, a method in the strictest sense of the word. An individualized learning program, for example, might use either a deductive or inductive approach to grammar, and in a very sophisticated program, the individual student might even be given the choice of an inductive or deductive presentation of the material to be mastered. The premise or philosophy of individualization is that the material and procedures of instruction should be selected to fit the individual student's interests and needs rather than the reverse situation (i.e., a particular method and materials are assumed to be the best for all students).

A class may be either totally or partially individualized, and individualization may involve any or all of a number of learner-related variables such as interests, abilities, needs, and cognitive style. Generally, there is some element of self-pacing present. This may be accomplished through learning activity packets, computer-assisted instruction modules, or other self-instructional materials by means of which students can proceed at their own speed to achieve the objectives of the course. Independent work of this type is frequently complemented by small-group activities. The role of the teacher in individualized instruction is that of a facilitator of learning; the focus of the course is clearly on the student. For a more detailed discussion of individualization, see Altman (2), Grittner and LaLeike (29), Logan (52), and Disick (19).

Given the heterogeneity of the adult population, individualization of instruction may offer great promise for the non-traditional student. According to Knox (43), the older the average age of a given group, the wider we can expect the range of interests, backgrounds, and abilities to be (p. 424), and Hay (36) underscores again and again the heterogeneity of adult learners and the concomitant need for teachers to "plan for maximum freedom in individual rates of progress" (p. 53).

While we should expect and provide for diversity of needs, interests, and abilities, there is every reason to believe that the key factor in any individualized program for adults will be pacing. This has been shown to be especially crucial in the case of the elderly. A study by Monge, cited by Agruso (1), found that in paired associate learning the older group (60-69) outperformed the younger group (30-39) when the pace of learning was decreased. In another paired associate study involving the

elderly, Calhoun and Gounard (10) found that optimal performance was reached when meaningfulness was increased, when repeated practice trials were given, and when pacing was controlled by the learners. Having reviewed numerous studies of adult learners and pacing, Knox (43) has concluded that "adults of any age, but especially older adults, learn most effectively when they set their own pace, take a break periodically, and fit distribution of learning episodes to content" (p. 440). He further emphasizes that adults vary greatly in the speed at which they learn most effectively. Thus, it would be erroneous to assume that simply slowing down the rate of learning would accommodate all older learners. There is a definite need for each individual to manipulate the pace of instruction.

In language classes, we normally deal with both knowledge and skills. Knowledge-type activities include, for example, the learning of vocabulary, cultural information, and grammatical principles. These can easily be accommodated to a self-paced format for mastery by the adult learner. In real life, we expect a certain amount of variation in pace with respect to the skills of reading and writing, and since reading and writing most often occur in isolation, the development of these two skills can also be nicely handled through a self-paced program. Speaking and listening, however, are closely linked to speed; this is particularly true of listening. For example, the listener in real life has no control over the speed at which the sportscaster or news commentator presents information on the radio. If, in a self-paced program, we give the listener a recorded program that can be started and stopped at will, we are reducing the speed factor somewhat. Much more research is needed in this area before an ideal individualized listening program can be described, but such a program is well within the realm of possibility.

Many aspects of individualization seem to be ideally suited to our extremely varied population of adult learners. Such a concept could serve as the basis for a very sophisticated program designed to provide a vast array of choices from which the learner, aided by the instructor, would create a tailor-made language course. We would expect the older adult learner to surpass the adolescent or young adult in the motivation and self-discipline needed to bring to completion the work undertaken in such a course. (Self-pacing that becomes no pace at all is a problem that has perennially plagued individualized programs.) Being able to work alone or in small groups and at one's own pace should increase the security of the learner. On the other hand, an instructor setting up an individualized program for older adults would do well to guard against isolating students to the extent that they feel they have no group identity. A support system is extremely important to students returning to college.

The extent to which individualization of instruction is

possible will, of course, vary from institution to institution; however, even a small program should be able to provide for some control of pace by the learner. Other features of individualization, such as small-group and pair work, can be easily incorporated into the simplest of programs. Larger universities with graduate programs will be able to offer individualized instruction to a still greater extent because of the supply of graduate assistants available for tutoring, leading small groups, testing, and the like.

Intensive Instruction and the Adult Learner

In contrast to individualization of instruction, which permits variable pacing, the intensive or immersion program increases and concentrates the time of exposure to the target language. This concept was originally developed during World War II to give military personnel fluency in a second language within a short time. It was designed for adult learners and as such merits consideration in our discussion of the nontraditional student. We should keep in mind, however, that the Army Specialized Training Program had personnel and facilities that colleges and universities, particularly in a time of economic retrenchment, may not be able to duplicate. Furthermore, applicants to the ASTP were carefully screened with respect to language aptitude, an option not often possible for institutions of higher learning. Nevertheless, Benseler and Schulz (8) report that intensive instruction is presently offered by many colleges, either in regular academic year or special summer programs. Such a program "generally provides for (1) a large number of instructional contact hours within a relatively short period of time; (2) small-group instruction and drill practice; (3) instruction carried out by a teaching team, of which each member has distinct functions; (4) emphasis on spoken colloquial language; and (5) little or no use of English during instruction" (p. 92).

Major strengths of such a program with respect to the nontraditional student would appear to be a reduction of interference from the native language made possible by almost constant exposure to the target language and a minimization of memory decay resulting from repeated practice of material to be learned. The heterogeneous adult population would also be expected to profit from a team of teachers with varied teaching styles and abilities. A primary obstacle to the intensive program for nontraditional students would be the many family and work-related responsibilities that they normally have. They may simply be unable to devote themselves full time to foreign language study. With retirement, more leisure time is available, but the elderly often become easily fatigued, and some would perhaps find an intensive program too strenuous. Thus, while the concept of intensive or immersion programs may have much to

offer to certain adult groups, such programs will probably prove impractical for most nontraditional learners.

Maximizing the Strengths of the Adult Learner

No matter which method or approach college and university professors are using, it is probable that they have had little professional training in it or any other methodology. While some postsecondary teachers have participated in supervised teaching of basic courses during graduate school, others have simply learned on the job, trying out on their students methods that their former teachers used with them. Even those fortunate enough to have received supervision are often largely unaware of the theoretical underpinnings of the techniques that they practice.

This situation, far from ideal under ordinary circumstances, may lead to serious problems when those circumstances are complicated by the presence of adult learners in the class. We have seen earlier that many full-time faculty do not appear to like to teach adults. Indeed, people in this country typically perceive older adults as less desirable to be around than younger adults (Knox, 43). This may be complicated in some cases by the fact that younger teachers feel insecure with students older than themselves (Weinstock, 83).

In this section, then, while no methodology will be prescribed, certain characteristics associated with adult learners and with successful teaching of adults will be outlined. First, let us look once again at the concept of andragogy. Vacca and Walker (80) state that andragogy differs from pedagogy in terms of self-concept, experience, readiness, and learning orientation of the learner. Nontraditional students, as opposed to traditional students, will be more independent and self-directed; they will have a rich store of experience that should be tapped by the teacher; their readiness for learning may have more to do with the requirements of their roles in real life than with biological and social development; and their learning orientation is centered on current problems and immediate application of learned skills to those problems (p. 24). These characteristics, if skillfully exploited by the instructor, should make teaching adults a pleasurable rather than a painful experience. For example, the independence of the student rather than constituting a threat to the teacher's authority might be exploited through individualized work.

Other characteristics of adults that have been viewed positively by adult educators are willingness to work, efficient use of time, a sense of proportion, well-developed critical skills, and the ability to use research facilities effectively (Elling, 22; Weinstock, 83). These positive qualities should be emphasized by the instructor, who should also keep in mind the older adult's self-consciousness and need to be accepted, approved, and appreciated as an individual (Hay, 36, pp. 102-3).

Teachers of adults who maximize their students' strengths and meet their emotional needs are likely to find that while they are very different from 18- to 21-year-olds, they are very rewarding to teach. Hay sees as characteristics desirable for teachers of adults a large share of patience, a willingness to learn and use the names of individuals, a keen social awareness, sensitivity to student feedback, and a desire to treat each student as an adult (p. 50). To these characteristics Weinstock adds warmth and informality as well as empathetic qualities (pp. 68-71). Knox (43) recommends that the teacher take a holistic approach to the instruction of adults (p. 9).

The view of the teacher as a facilitator of learning or manager of instruction seems particularly well suited to the teaching of adults. The instructor whose class is learner-centered is far less likely to feel threatened by the nontraditional student than is the more authoritarian teacher who demands total control over the instructional process. Furthermore, a learner-centered class takes advantage of valuable characteristics of adults such as their self-directedness, willingness to work, and efficient use of time. The college instructor, whether in a career-oriented or special topics course or in an undergraduate liberal arts program, would do well to consider a move toward more learner-centered instruction.

The Classroom and the Adult Learner

For many students returning to colleges and universities, the campus itself is an alien and unfamiliar territory that requires numerous environmental adjustments (Weinstock, 83, p. 87). This feeling of alienation extends to the classroom, where the older student may feel rather ridiculous trying to fit an ample body into a desk designed for a younger and thinner form. Both Hay (36) and Weinstock state that, ideally, older students should sit in comfortable lounge chairs during their classes, and both suggest an informal seating arrangement. The matter of physical comfort is also treated by Hand (34), who specifically mentions heat, lighting, ventilation, and furniture. He further recommends an accessible meeting place with a minimum of stairs whenever possible.

To compensate for sensory impairment and less-than-perfect physiological condition, Knox (43) advises good illumination without glare, and good acoustics for the classroom. Hand stresses the importance of large charts, diagrams, and pictures and suggests that all typewritten and duplicated materials for adults be prepared with pica type and double spacing. Foreign language teachers should be particularly concerned with the quality of tape-recorded materials and equipment used with adults.

Attention to the physical environment is part and parcel of the Lozanov (55) method, but other approaches to language teaching have traditionally ignored such factors. Thus, arriving at

an optimal classroom learning environment will depend to a large extent upon the initiative and creativity of the individual language teacher. Perhaps a class can be scheduled to meet in a dormitory lounge rather than a typical classroom. In any case, whenever possible, teachers of adults--especially the elderly--should structure the classroom environment in such a way that anxiety, fatigue, and factors associated with physical health and sensory impairment are minimized. It should be emphasized, however, that learning can and does take place in situations that are far from ideal, provided that the instructor is able to create a positive classroom atmosphere and to manipulate skillfully the instructional variables outlined below.

Materials for Adults

A key element in the classroom environment is the material used by teachers and students to achieve the goals of instruction. Most commercially available material is linked to one of the various methodologies discussed earlier in this report; therefore, a review of the strengths and weaknesses of these methodologies with respect to the adult learner should be extremely helpful to anyone who is selecting material to be used by adults. For example, we have seen that adults seem to learn best when grammar is presented deductively and that lengthy dialogues to memorize may place a great burden on the adult learner.

In addition to methodological considerations, the teacher of adults should look for material that has large print, short units of work, and clear diagrams. Ideally, it should provide advance organizers, extensive practice and review material, and summary lessons to help the student relate new to previously learned material (Hand, 34; Knox, 43). Since beaming the same message through at least two senses is believed to offset sensory impairment, audiovisual materials of high quality can be used to advantage in the instruction of adults. Some provision should be made for personal pacing of at least part of the course by means of learning activity packets or other self-instructional materials.

Adult learners, as we have seen, are oriented toward the real world and prefer a relevant, practical approach. This fact has been exploited especially in career-oriented courses, where materials have been developed for the world of work. The Institute of Modern Languages (42), for example, now markets materials developed for use by American Express to train businesspeople traveling abroad. Career language kits to be used as supplementary materials have been developed by Tamarkin and Wilkins (78), and Iodice (38) has developed a special course in French for the Chrysler Corporation. It is likely that we shall continue to see the development of such special-purpose materials for use with adults. Awareness of the notional-functional

approach (Harlow, 35; Valdman, 81) should aid the creator of career-oriented materials; care should be taken, however, not to focus on language use to the exclusion of physiological and psychological characteristics of adult learners.

In contrast to special-purpose materials, the materials used in undergraduate language instruction are not typically designed for immediate application. Creators of these materials frequently seem to assume that their audience will consist of teenagers, who are chiefly interested in what life is like for their counterparts in the foreign culture. As more and more college freshmen and sophomores are now older than 25, such texts and materials may be viewed as juvenile by quite a few students. Elling (22) suggests that childish material should be replaced whenever possible by materials in real use--newspapers, radio broadcasts, films, and the like. Certainly, textbook authors and publishers should be made aware of the fact that today's college market is both older and less homogeneous than they have assumed in the past.

Because few materials have been designed specifically for older learners, it is likely that current texts and materials will need to be adapted and/or supplemented by the instructor. In order to reduce recall demands on the adult learner, the instructor might, for example, teach for active use only one way of asking questions. If the focus of the course is on communication, question formation could be introduced earlier than suggested by the textbook sequencing. In cases where question-formation exercises are inadequate, the teacher should provide additional practice and review material. Such manipulation of the basic text to accommodate the needs of a particular group of learners, desirable in all situations, becomes more of a necessity when one is teaching adults. Stevick's (73) advice on writing and adapting language lessons is an excellent guide for the creator or adapter of materials.

It is very likely, too, that the text will have to be supplemented by, for example, a listening program or readers selected on the basis of appeal to a mature audience. Knox (43) recommends the use of a variety of resources, including human and community resources, to meet the needs of the diverse adult population. Supplementary materials should be chosen according to the same criteria that have been suggested for the basic text and materials.

An Optimal Language-Learning Program for Adults

Even though ideal situations may never be achieved, they can serve as yardsticks against which to measure the realities of our courses and programs. In outlining below an optimal language-learning program for adults, I have chosen to limit myself to well-established and widely known language practices which, when studied from the viewpoint of adult learning

theory, appear to be particularly well suited to meeting the needs of the nontraditional student. I do not mean to imply that the suggestions below are, in any sense of the word, final ones. They are at best informed guesses based upon currently available knowledge and should be regarded as such by the reader. Recommendations for future investigation will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

Given the extreme diversity of the adult population, one cannot ignore the merits of individualized instruction as a teaching philosophy. This is particularly important in superficially homogeneous classes such as career Spanish, French for travelers, and the like, where a common interest might be allowed to mask the diversity of the learners with respect to other factors. Even in an undergraduate liberal arts program, where nontraditional learners will probably be noticeably different, the instructor should not assume that any individual student is going to conform to a stereotyped notion of "the older language learner." Each nontraditional student is an individual and must be treated as such.

In keeping with the philosophy of individualization, older learners should be given a wide variety of options from which they, with the aid of the instructor, can create an almost tailor-made course. It is hardly likely that these learners will achieve to capacity in a traditional four-skills, teacher-centered, lock-step program. Instead, they should be given the opportunity to choose to develop whichever language skills they wish and to do so at their own speed. In courses taken for credit, credits should be tied to measurable proficiencies rather than to time periods such as quarters and semesters. This would enable older learners to take two or more semesters to complete what is expected of younger adults in one semester.

The amount of time needed to achieve the stated proficiency will depend not only on the individual characteristics of the learners but also on the fit between their capabilities and the skills that they choose to develop. We might predict, for example, that the reading skill could be developed to a high degree of proficiency in less time than the oral skills. Certainly, older learners should be given the option of fulfilling a language requirement through reading.

Having opted for development of the reading skill, the adult learner will be provided with still more choices. There will be a wide variety of reading materials ranging from the practical and relevant to the aesthetic; all will have been selected for mature adults and will be printed in bold, clear type. Materials will be graded according to difficulty, and a diagnostic test (untimed) will enable student and teacher to select the appropriate entry point into the reading program. Some reading matter will be adapted for the classroom, but at the more advanced level, real-world material such as news magazines and/or novels will be included. Learning packets devel-

oped to accompany the texts will provide advance organizers, reading tips, exercises with essential vocabulary, and clear instructions as to what the learner is expected to do. In a very sophisticated program, the student might be given the option of working completely in the target language for direct reading or of translating the texts into the native language as in the grammar/translation method. Parallel-column bilingual reading materials as described by Parent and Belasco (58) would be still another possible format. All testing in a program for adults should be untimed.

The program described above could easily be completed by a student working alone with minimal aid from the instructor; however, it is likely that the nontraditional student will feel the need for some kind of a support group. This need could be met through small-group and pair work in which students are arranged according to interest (they may be reading the same book) or reading level (an advanced reader tutors a less advanced reader).

Reading instruction should encourage adults to be aware of cognates in languages where this is appropriate; in this way, they can fully exploit their native language vocabulary. Special emphasis should be placed on the role of inference in reading, as older learners, who are characteristically not risk-takers, may be afraid to guess at word meanings. Only that grammar which is necessary for the development of the reading skill should be taught. Gender, for example, can be minimized in a course with a reading objective.

An individualized reading program would in many respects appear to be an ideal alternative for the nontraditional student. Not only would such a program provide for a variety of needs, interests, and abilities, but it would also maximize what appear to be the language-learning strengths of older adults and minimize their most frequently cited weaknesses. Scheduling can be more flexible, too, when whole-class activities are minimized or eliminated. Needless to say, the opportunity to concentrate on this one receptive language skill, to the exclusion of the others, considerably reduces memory demands.

In spite of the arguments in favor of a reading objective for adults, the fact remains that many of them, if given a choice, will opt to develop communication skills in the target language. This decision may be based on necessity, as in the case of businesspeople or medical and law-enforcement personnel, or on purely personal reasons. Again, with a multilevel group, much individualized and small-group or pair work is preferable to a whole-class format in terms of efficiency and anxiety reduction. Since communication usually assumes that there are at least two persons present, most true communication will require activities in small groups or pairs. These can be combined with independent work on pronunciation, oral grammar, and listening comprehension.

The designer of a course in which communication is emphasized should not overlook the fact that the simultaneous presentation of listening and speaking at the beginning of the program has been found to be less effective than an initial period devoted to listening alone. Even during the period when both skills are being developed, listening comprehension can be improved in much the same way as reading comprehension through the use of individualized recorded materials. For example, pauses may be inserted at appropriate points in the text to enhance the processing of the oral material. Tapes to be used with older students should be of high quality, and the machines on which they are played should also be in excellent condition. In preparing learning packets for an independent listening program, some of the suggestions for the independent reading program will no doubt be helpful.

In dealing with older students, a practical approach is also advisable. Typically, they want to know how to function orally with speakers of the other language, i.e., how to make introductions, how to apologize, how to order a meal, etc. This real-world orientation should guide the instructor in the selection of what grammar must be taught for oral use. The instructor might, for example, choose to teach for active use only one way of expressing the future, even though there may be two "future tenses" in the grammar. The student's task can be further simplified if fluency rather than perfect pronunciation is given first priority. Meaningfulness, too, should be emphasized, and in no case should adults be expected to repeat what they do not understand. Having a written text of the oral material and perhaps a native language translation of it would enhance meaningfulness as well as memory. A deductive approach to grammar combined with intensive oral practice and review, as in Carroll's (12) cognitive habit-formation method, would be expected to produce better results than either the cognitive or audiolingual method alone.

Whether the aim is reading or communication, group work in an individualized program for adults should take place in a comfortable, well-lighted and well-equipped room where the atmosphere is informal. The ideal teacher, a warm and sensitive person, will know not only the language but also principles of andragogy and potential areas of difficulty for older language learners. He or she will thus be able to facilitate learning by diagnosing individual learner needs and by providing appropriate independent and group work to accomplish personal goals.

Future Directions

As foreign language educators, we must not be content simply to use existing knowledge to attempt to meet present needs of nontraditional students; we must, realizing that our population is an aging one, continue to create new knowledge in

the field of adult foreign language teaching. It has been pointed out by Gould that our knowledge of adults as learners is at present insufficient: "We are many years away from having the experience and the studies necessary for an in-depth understanding of the adult period comparable to our current understanding of childhood and adolescence" (Coppedge, 15, p. 25). This point of view is seconded by Knox (43), who believes that it may be years before research will have identified strategies most effective with adults with various characteristics. In the field of foreign language acquisition, Liston (51) and von Elek and Oskarsson (82) have found our current knowledge lacking and have called for increased investigation into factors that operate specifically for adults as language learners.

Adult second language acquisition in a natural setting is now emerging as an important research area, and findings from investigations of this kind no doubt have implications for college and university instruction of foreign language students. The fact remains, however, that there are important differences between an immigrant who acquires a second language on the street and the nontraditional college student who learns a foreign language in the classroom. These differences call for research specifically oriented toward the nontraditional learner. It is hoped that the following list, although by no means exhaustive, will serve as a catalyst for such research:

· Such methods as community language learning, suggestology, and the total physical response method, which have been used with apparent success with adults in certain settings, should be investigated still further to determine to what extent they are applicable to the college or university setting. This methodological research could be a combination of action research undertaken informally by classroom teachers and true experimental research with appropriate statistical controls. Because of their relative freedom in comparison with traditional undergraduate language programs, noncredit continuing education programs may provide the best "laboratory" for such investigations--at least at the outset.

· Because this is a new area of investigation, case studies are recommended. Although they have obvious shortcomings, case studies are of great value in bringing to light factors that may form the basis for future experimental research. The extreme heterogeneity of the adult population will necessitate numerous studies of individual adult learners before hypotheses can be formulated with any confidence.

· Cognitive style has been identified by Knox (43) as one of the most promising areas of investigation into adult learning. The relationship between cognitive style and adult language learning should be given a high priority by researchers who may see their work as an extension of that of Reinert (61) and Lepke (49), for example.

· Investigation into specific areas of language learning

as they relate to age is also recommended. Such investigations might focus on one language skill, e.g., listening comprehension, and would complement and/or supplement broader methodological studies such as that of von Elek and Oskarsson (82).

Results of the research efforts outlined above will no doubt have an impact not only on a methodology or methodologies for older adults but also on diagnostic measures, instructional materials, and teacher preparation at the postsecondary level. There will certainly also be implications for objectives, scheduling, and general program design. While awaiting the results of experimentation, directors of college and university programs should exhibit their awareness of nontraditional students by, for example, polling these students with respect to materials used, scheduling, and the like. Because they are mature adults, nontraditional students can serve as partners with the faculty in the development of programs best suited to their needs. Colleges and universities that overlook this fact will be ignoring a valuable, if not vital, resource for curriculum planning.

To conclude, let us return to the metaphor of the first section of this paper. Whether we like it or not, we as a nation are aging, and higher education has begun to reflect that fact. Refusing to see our nontraditional students as learners with special characteristics will not make those characteristics disappear any more than refusing to look into a mirror will halt the aging process. An increasing proportion of older adults in basic foreign language classes is a present and future reality, and this fact will necessarily bring about change in our college and university programs. The institutions that will fare best during the next decades will be those that view the influx of older adults not simply as a buffer against declining enrollments but as a challenging new group of students, perhaps not as quick and energetic as 18- to 24-year-olds, but whose seriousness of purpose, maturity, independence, and wisdom can, if properly exploited, greatly enrich foreign language instruction at the postsecondary level.

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